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A Dissertation on Rheumatism

by

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of Virginia
passed Mar. 6. 1818

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Preface.

In preparing myself a candidate for the ensuing examination, it is incumbent on me to exhibit an inaugural dissertation, which nothing but a strict compliance with that institute imposed on us by the university of Pennsylvania, would have induced me at this early period of my study to have undertaken; for the limited experience which I have had on the chambers of the sick will not enable me to suggest any thing new; or warrant me in corroborating any fact which I may adduce.

To indulge in physiological speculations to you it would be thought rather ostentatious pedantry, than the result of elaborate discrimination.

And I am well aware that a prolix series of reiterated facts would detract

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more from your patience than it would contribute to my merit.

Of its imperfection I am not insensible.

With these persuasions I submit it to the care and liberality which have long paved the path of men of magnanimity and genius.

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Rheumatism.

The characteristicks of rheumatism as, assigned by Dr Cullen are pyrexia, pain about the parts following the tracts of muscles, attacking the knees and larger articulations, in preferance to those of the feet and hands, increased by external heat.
This disease has been divided by nosologists into acute and chronick; being known by the former appellation, when there is a great degree of pyrexia and inflammation present, and by the latter when there is no great degree of fever or inflammation attending, but merely pains upon motion.
Rheumatism may arise at any time of the year, when there are frequent vicissitudes of weather from heat to cold; but the spring and autumn are seasons in which it is most prevalent; and it attacks persons of all ages; but very young people are more exempt from it than adults.
Those, whose occupations subject them to

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alternations of heat and cold, are particularly liable to be affected with rheumatism, Dr Cullen thinks a hereditary taint gives predisposition to it.

Rheumatism in some respects bears a strong resemblance to gout, still in other respects it differs from it very materially.

It does not usually come on so suddenly as a fit of gout, but for the most part gives the patient warning by a slow and gradual increase of pain.

Neither is it fixed to one part like gout, but is distinguished by its frequent wandering from place to place, accompanied by a sense of numbness.

It seldom attacks small joints, but is confined chiefly to the larger, as the hips, knees and shoulders; gout is almost always preceded by an affection of the stomach which is rarely the case in rheumatism.

Acute rheumatism like most of the

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[illegible] fatigue & thus restores to the[illegible] [illegible] lost tone. The warm [illegible] is a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] dence arises [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] effectually [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the disease consists.

The warm bath of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] promises much advantage when properly applied.

Exercise either of the [illegible] staff so far as it can easily bear it or of the whole body by riding or any other mode of gestation will be very advantageous.

Rubbing the diseased parts with stimulant embrocations may be very beneficial.

There are a number of [illegible] remedies that are [illegible] recommended, such as the flowers of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] substance [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] preparation of [illegible] volatile alkali; Dover's powder [illegible] have been

use under particular circumstances. The apparent stable, dangerous cobra has been very highly extolled by Dr Fayrer as a remedy in cobra poisoning, and accumulation, but when to administer it a practitioner must be very careful, lest exposed to exhaustion of the system with an undue tendency of coldness and want of action on the part of the body.

The primary effects of this medicine at least to consider effects are heat of the throat with much lachrymation, intolerable light headache which hinders from doing anything in the new place, nausea, some or sometimes miliary eruptions on the skin.

The fever which precedes the cyclibation is commonly weak and accompanied with comatose active and congestive fever.

[illegible] of the system seems to excite its own secreting operation: every function being more or less invigorated, and especially some of the secretory offices as the urinary [illegible] and perhaps the seminal.

Contrary to a very uniform law of the animal economy, by which it seems to be ordained [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] should act in an inverse ratio, we [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] actions and of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to the [illegible] of absorption [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] syphilitic inflammation.

Inflammations are [illegible] [illegible] in [illegible], [illegible] of [illegible], and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] be [illegible] with [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] induced.

[illegible] [illegible] is more effectual than

[illegible] immediately [illegible] until a [illegible] the limb is [illegible] extended [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] ought to be continued for a considerable length of time

A few months since I had the pleasure of witnessing the beneficial efficacy of [illegible] in [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

The patient [illegible] [illegible] was a [illegible] about sixteen years of [illegible] [illegible] with the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] of the knees was compl[illegible] [illegible] bandages [illegible] was wholly unable to walk

The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] generally [illegible] in this disease without effect [illegible] [illegible]

would by the remedy just mentioned.

That which he gave, he prepared by taking one part of laudanum combined with three parts of the tincture of veratrum album, the dose of which was ninety drops infused in a small quantity of water, taken in the morning while the patients stomach was empty. It produced slight nausia, followed by a gentle perspiration, and evacuation from his bowels.

The succeeding morning he was much better, the Physician gave him one hundred and twenty drops, the effect was very similar.

I saw the boy the third morning and much to my astonishment, the boy with a little assistance was able to walk.

The attending Physician still continued for several subsequent mornings to give small doses to the amount of twenty

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Ten days after its first administration the boy was perfectly convalescent.

The result of its administration in several other cases of chronick rheumatism were so nearly similar, I deem it a consumption of time to detail them.

In chronick rheumatism, the diet should be nutritive, but not heating.

Vinous and distilled liquors should be used sparingly.

In every instance where the physical powers of the system are weakened, perfect temperance, pure air, and moderate exercise are the best restoratives.

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